

Serial No. 09/972,448
Response dated September 23, 2003
Reply to Office Action of 06/25/03

Docket No. 5000-4960

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-10, 12, 14-15, and 21-23 are pending in this application. Claims 4, 11, 13, 17-20 have been previously withdrawn. Claims 2, 16 and 21-23 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 3, 5-10, 12, 14 and 15 have been amended. Applicants submit no new matter has been added by way of this amendment. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-identified application, in view of the above amendments and following remarks.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indication that claims 2, 3, 5-10, 12, 14 and 15 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants have amended claim 2, incorporating the elements of independent claim 1. Therefore, Applicants submit that independent claim 2, as well as claims 3, 5-10, 12, 14, 15, and 21-23, which directly or indirectly depend therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

Drawing Objections

The Office Action indicates that the figures in the Application are objected to. Specifically, the Office Action asserts, "Figures 21 and 22 should be designated by a legend such as --Prior Art--". Also, the Office Action objects to Figure 5 because "reference character "108" has been used to designate both a pressure insertion end portion and a leading end portion. Applicants submit that the enclosed amended Figs. 5, 21, and 22, address the issues raised in the

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Office Action. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that these objections have been overcome.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent No. 05-139,170 (“JP ‘170”). The Examiner indicated that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of base claim 1. See Office Action at p. 4. Instead, Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite the limitations of claim 2, and have canceled claim 2. Therefore, claim 1 is now in allowable condition. The rest of the pending claims depend from claim 1 and are also allowable.

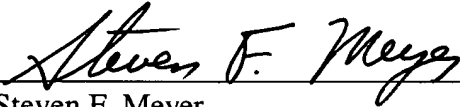
CONCLUSION

It is now believed that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. In view of these remarks, an early and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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